



feet first policy

taking a stance to advance walkability

Contact us for information
about Feet First policies

314 1st Avenue S
Seattle, WA 98104
www.feetfirst.org
info@feetfirst.org
206 652 2310

Greenways

Policy

where we stand

Advocacy is a major component of the work Feet First does. These policy papers, prepared by our Policy Committee, convey Feet First's position on key issues of interest to increase safe and easy ways for people to choose to go by foot.

Mission

who we are – what we do

Feet First promotes walkable communities and envisions people walking every day for their health, transportation, environment, community, and pleasure.



background

In recent years, cities have begun turning some of their neighborhood residential streets into greenways by slowing down traffic and adding pedestrian and bicycle improvements. Some cities are also using these opportunities to put in "green infrastructure" like natural stormwater drainage and pre-treatment. The city of Portland appears to be a leader in this concept. Cities from Chicago to Los Angeles are also working on their own greenway systems. Portland began by creating "bike boulevards" that prioritized bicycles, and over time these became neighborhood greenways. In Portland, these greenways are defined as residential streets with low vehicle volumes and low vehicle speeds, where people riding bikes and walking are given priority.



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Greenways

A 20 mph speed limit is often developed, as well as traffic calming. Portland's greenways are designed to provide connections between open spaces and social benefits, such as exercise and social interactions.²

In Seattle, the Seattle Neighborhood Greenways community organization promotes greenways as safe and healthy places to get around, whether by bicycling or walking. The organization defines greenways as residential streets proximate to main arterials, with low volumes of auto traffic and low speeds, where people who walk and ride bicycles are given priority.³

Seattle's Department of Transportation (SDOT) lists the following for selection criteria for neighborhood greenways: (1) less than 1,000 vehicles per day, (2) corridors with parks, businesses, and schools that would generate pedestrian and bicycle trips, and (3) community requests. SDOT will do an inventory of existing conditions and traffic data, and evaluate intersections. Community members will identify opportunities and potential improvements, and staff will work on designing the improvements. Once the design is finalized and shared with the public, and funds are available, the improvements are constructed.⁴

Students in the University of Washington School of Landscape Architecture developed a greenways toolkit.⁵ They propose a goal of a complete network of greenways, whose average speed is under 20 mph. They describe "quality criteria", including connections, safety, enjoyable spaces, comfort, and movement, and these criteria can be used to evaluate designs before and after implementation. They describe the physical elements, which foster these goals:

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- invitations: furniture and amenities, new public spaces
- wayfinding: signage, pavement markings
- traffic calming: changing the street layout, raised interruptions
- traffic control: physical barriers, traffic rules
- modal separation: delineation between bicyclists and pedestrians, also separating bikes and cars
- green stormwater infrastructure: street trees, infiltration, and water re-use.



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Greenways

why it matters to walking

The best greenways combine pedestrian and bicycle amenities and safety improvements with place-making, wayfinding, and green infrastructure. Many older streets were not designed with these things in mind. Retrofitting streets to support all kinds of people in our communities (with walkers, strollers, canes, and grocery carts), as well as dealing with our stormwater management needs, is more expensive than just putting paint on pavement, but absolutely critical to proper greenway design. SDOT has recognized this in the planning and implementation of the Central Greenway (roughly parallel to 23rd Avenue in the Central District), where they are implementing improved crosswalks, ADA curb ramps, way-finding, and traffic-calming measures.⁶

Greenways can provide opportunities for safe, human-scale pedestrian experiences, providing pleasant corridors open to everyone.

Greenways can also provide opportunities for safe pedestrian facilities other than traditional curb-and-gutter sidewalks, depending on the built environment, existing street infrastructure, and other related factors.

feet first position

Feet First supports neighborhood greenways if they are designed for people of all ages and abilities and for all types of users. It is important to note that the new infrastructure is not simply bicycle paths and are not just for people riding bicycles. Neighborhood greenways must be designed and constructed with consideration for the needs of people (including those with wheelchairs, strollers, walkers, and for people who are deaf/blind.). Feet First strongly believes greenways should incorporate Universal Design principles (link to Universal Design policy paper) and should take advantage of green infrastructure and stormwater management opportunities.⁷





Greenways

resources

1. Greenways for America, Charles Little, The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1990
2. <http://vimeo.com/16552771>;
<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/348902>
3. <http://seattlegreenways.org>
4. <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/greenways.htm>
5. http://issuu.com/neighborhoodgreenwayssea/docs/neighborhoodgreenways_toolkit_final
6. <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/centralgreenway.htm>
7. http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/kbenfield/how_green-Infrastructure_inves.html

Image developed by Community Design Group and provided courtesy of Twin Cities Greenways



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